

Flames of Freedom Podcast Episode 5

"Wandering"

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This is a production of Lance Toland Entertainment.

FLAMES OF FREEDOM

EPISODE 5 (9): WANDERING

FADE IN UNDER  
OPENING MUSIC:

SFX: OPENING MUSIC

ANNOUNCER

Welcome to Flames of Freedom,  
Episode 5: Wandering, a docudrama  
based on actual historical events  
brought to you by Lance Toland  
Entertainment. In the previous  
episode, Diogo and Gracia's son,  
André, had just confronted the ugly  
face of hatred toward the Jews of  
England. Diogo's ambivalence about  
how to address this issue with his  
son threatens to create a rift  
between himself and Gracia.

ANDRÉ

Do you know what just happened?

DIOGO

What?

ANDRÉ

We're not allowed in the shop down  
the street. Did you know that? The  
shopkeeper called me a filthy Jew.

DIOGO

He did what?

ANDRÉ

He called me a filthy Jew and told  
me we weren't welcome.

DIOGO

(taking a deep breath)  
André, you can't let people like  
this get to you. He's nothing but a  
foolish shopkeeper who doesn't know  
any better.

ANDRÉ

He doesn't know anything but to  
hate me, and he doesn't even know  
me. What have Jews ever done to him  
to deserve that?

DIOGO

André, we're guests in this country. We must be patient. Changing people's attitudes sometimes takes generations. Let us not forget that being a Jew in Portugal was reason enough for being burned at the stake. At least here in England, we can openly be Jews without the constant fear of death.

ANDRÉ

But if people hate us just because we're Jews, that's not freedom, Papa.

DIOGO

True. But it's early days, André. Not everyone feels this way toward us. Patience.

ANDRÉ

Patience? You told us that leaving Portugal would be a good thing. It looks to me like we traded one devil for another.

ZIPPORAH

My brother turned and left, slamming the door behind him.

SFX: door slamming

DIOGO

André! André!

ZIPPORAH

My mother came in from the kitchen, drying her hands, curious what all of the shouting was about.

GRACIA

What is going on?

DIOGO

(exasperated)

What's going on? I have an idealistic son who wants the world to be perfect. And he's waking up to the fact that it isn't. That's what's going on.

GRACIA

What happened?

DIOGO

The shopkeeper down the street refused to sell to him, calling him a filthy Jew.

GRACIA

What are you going to do about it?

DIOGO

Do about it? What do you mean?

GRACIA

If you don't stand up for your son, who will?

DIOGO

Gracia, whose side are you on? I'm just trying to make things right here. Can't you see how difficult that is with a quick-tempered son?

GRACIA

I'm not sure you want to know what I see, Diogo...

SFX: Musical transition

BENJAMIN

So what happened to André, and what did your father and mother do after this?

ZIPPORAH

I will tell you more about André and my brother Manoel in a moment. Regarding my parents, they always loved each other, but the strain of finding our place not only in London but in the Jewish community became increasingly contentious as my mother felt more and more alienated from Judaism. It turns out her fantasy did not quite match reality. Almost like it was yesterday, I remember the first morning we attended services at Bevis Marks Synagogue. When we entered, men were putting on prayer shawls and wrapping phylacteries around their arms and heads.

(MORE)

## ZIPPORAH (CONT'D)

It was all so foreign to me and even more so to my mother. This is when David Machado, a man who was to become my first husband years later, introduced himself. And the kind woman, Abigail Minis, who had brought us clothing the day we arrived, was right behind him.

## DAVID MACHADO

Dr. Nunes, I'm David Machado, the Rabbi's assistant. He asked Abigail Minis and me to be your guides today.

## DIOGO

Thank you. We are a bit...bewildered, I guess. It's all so new.

## DAVID MACHADO

It's understandable. If you men could follow me, and women, please follow Abigail; she will escort you upstairs to the balcony.

## GRACIA

Women and men have to sit separately?

## DAVID MACHADO

Yes. Abigail will do her best to explain everything to you.

## ZIPPORAH

I, my mother, aunt, and sisters followed Abigail up the stairs as David started handing out prayer shawls to the men.

SFX: footsteps on stairs.

## DAVID MACHADO

You first hold it like this in your two hands. You see the prayer here in Hebrew. It reads Baruch attah Ado-noy Elo-hay-nu Melech ha'olam asher kid-sha-nu b'mitz-vo-sav v'tzi-vanu l'his-atef b'tzitzis. It means Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to enwrap ourselves with tzitzis.

(MORE)

DAVID MACHADO (CONT'D)

Then, you kiss each end of the prayer and wrap the shawl over your head like this.

SFX: fabric being wrapped around each person.

ZIPPORAH

Awkwardly, the men did their best to mimic him.

DAVID MACHADO

Very good. Now, bring it to rest on your shoulders like this. Here is a prayer book for each of you. There are some seats over here. Follow me, and I'll show you how to daven, to pray.

ZIPPORAH

When we women arrived in the balcony, Abigail handed each of us a small covering for our heads along with a prayer book.

ABIGAIL MINIS

I realize none of you read Hebrew, but I'll do my best to help you follow the service. Here, there's room for all of us to sit.

ZIPPORAH

Nervously, we followed her and started to sit when she stopped us.

ABIGAIL MINIS

No, no, in this part of the service, we stand.

ZIPPORAH

From then on, we watched Abigail out of the corner of our eyes for clues on when to stand and when to sit.

GRACIA

(whispers)

What are the men saying?

ABIGAIL MINIS

(whispering)

First, they are thanking God for giving us strength each morning.

(MORE)

ABIGAIL MINIS (CONT'D)

And for not making us a slave or a non-Jew. And this last one, for not making them a woman.

GRACIA

(whispering)

I don't understand why men would want to be blessed by God for not making them a woman. What is wrong with being a woman?

ABIGAIL MINIS

(whispering)

Nothing at all. In fact, it's a blessing. We are entrusted to take care of the children and the household, whereas men have to come to the synagogue to pray each day. We're relieved of that responsibility so that men can fulfill it for us.

GRACIA

(whispering)

That makes no sense to me. It sounds like something a man would have devised.

ABIGAIL MINIS

(whispering)

Just accept it for now. You'll understand it soon enough. Now, we can sit down.

SFX: people sitting on wooden pews.

GRACIA

(whispering)

This is what the women do? We don't participate in the prayers?

ABIGAIL MINIS

(whispering)

We pray, but in our way. With time, as you learn Hebrew, you'll understand better.

GRACIA

(whispering)

I hope you're right.

ZIPPORAH

Below us, the men were swaying rhythmically back and forth.

SFX: Men chanting Hebrew prayers

MANOEL

(whispering)

Why are they moving like that?

DAVID MACHADO

(whispering)

It's what we call davening. As men pray, their bodies are inspired to move.

MANOEL

(whispering)

But why?

DAVID MACHADO

(whispering)

It's hard to explain. Some believe it's the soul's desire to abandon the body and reunite itself with God. As you become more familiar with the prayers, you'll see.

ZIPPORAH

At the time the whole thing was quite a spectacle to us. Even the Rabbi's sermon in English could just as well have been Hebrew; that's how little I understood. And with the closing prayer, the service was over. I have since learned that we Jews are commanded to welcome and love strangers, but my father told me later that was not necessarily the reality as he overheard two men talking a few aisles away.

JEW ONE

(loud whisper)

What do these Conversos think they're doing bringing a Blackamoor slave into the sinagoga?

JEW TWO

(loud whisper)

It's preposterous. I'll have a word with Rabbi Nieto. We can't have Negro servants here during prayers, much less wearing tallit as though they're one of us.



ZIPPORAH

Not only did my father hear what they said. Painfully, Lucio Gama did as well. Until then, I never gave a second thought to the color of one's skin and what that had to do with religion.

DIOGO

(whispering to Lucio)

Pay no attention to these men. They mean no harm.

LUCIO GAMA

(whispering)

If they mean no harm, why would they say such things?

DIOGO

(whispering)

They're ignorant fools. You have every right to be here. Maybe more of a right than I have. Ignore them, Lucio. Please.

LUCIO GAMA

Diogo, it's hard to ignore when it's right in your face.

DIOGO

Just be patient. When they come to know you, they will accept you and love you as we do.

LUCIO GAMA

Perhaps.

DIOGO

Now, let's find the women. We have all been invited to lunch with the Rabbi.

LUCIO GAMA

I think I'll pass. I don't have much of an appetite at the moment.

ZIPPORAH

Lucio handed my father his prayer shawl, turned, and walked down the aisle to the synagogue door.

DIOGO

Lucio, please, come back. Lucio...

SFX: CHANGE OF SCENE

BENJAMIN

I don't think I have ever seen a Negro Jew. I know that Uncle Moses and Uncle Daniel owned slaves. Did that make the slaves Jewish?

ZIPPORAH

No, being Jewish is as much a heritage as it is a choice. And regarding Uncle Moses, I'm unsure that you knew that he was married to a Mulatto woman named Rose. Her skin was as dark as Shem Noah's. So, Rose, if she were alive today, she would have been your Great Aunt.

BENJAMIN

Was she Jewish?

ZIPPORAH

I don't believe so. It simply wasn't something important for Moses.

BENJAMIN

What about Lucio Gama? If your parents adopted him as their son, would that make him my Great Uncle?

ZIPPORAH

I guess it would. What do you think of that?

BENJAMIN

I have a great aunt and a great uncle who are mulatto. My friends will never believe me. I don't recall ever meeting Lucio Gama. Is he still alive?

ZIPPORAH

Unfortunately, no, but he led an interesting life, especially when we came to America. But once again, that's jumping ahead of the story. We'll get to the life of Lucio Gama, who became Shem Noah. But first, let me tell you about my father's first meeting with the Rabbi and about his bris.

BENJAMIN

Your father had to be circumcised?  
Really? At his age?

ZIPPORAH

Yes, that was his feeling as well  
when he sat down with Rabbi Nieto  
to discuss what it would take to  
become Jews again...

SFX: musical transition

RABBI NIETO

...Diogo, it's forgivable that your  
ancestors were forced to convert.  
But by the Laws of Moses, your  
situation as Jewish descendants who  
have been forced to practice  
Catholicism presents...a quandary  
for us rabbis.

DIOGO

But we continued to be Catholics  
only to save our lives. If the  
Inquisition discovered us  
"Judaizing," they would have killed  
us. Does that not count for  
anything?

RABBI NIETO

Of course, it does. I have no idea  
what it would have been like to  
have been in hiding like that, but  
you must understand it's not in my  
power to just wave my hand and  
declare you're immediately Jewish  
and no longer a practicing  
Catholic.

DIOGO

Even though it was in secret, we  
did our best to keep Shabbat and  
celebrate the important festivals.  
Admittedly, we don't know most of  
the prayers or Hebrew...

RABBI NIETO

...Knowing how to pray in Hebrew is  
only a small part of it. It's not  
even required, actually. It's more  
the spirit and practice of being  
Jewish.

(MORE)

RABBI NIETO (CONT'D)

The rebbes call it accepting the yoke of the commandments.

DIOGO

What's to accept? We have disavowed Christianity and kept alive our Jewish identity. And we have done our best to keep Kosher...

RABBI NIETO

...those are important steps. But there's more. Much more. You and your children will have to acknowledge the authority of the Torah in your lives, including the Oral Torah and the many commandments it lays out. Keeping Shabbat and eating Kosher are just two aspects of that commitment. There are six hundred and thirteen commandments in total. Perhaps the most relevant and pressing is that you must be circumcised.

DIOGO

Circumcised?

RABBI NIETO

Yes.

DIOGO

At my age?

RABBI NIETO

I'm afraid so. It was a covenant between Abraham and God. It says in the Book of Genesis that 'every male child among you shall be circumcised.'

DIOGO

But my sons and I are no longer children.

RABBI NIETO

True. But in the eyes of the Torah, you're children of Abraham. There is no way around it if you want to be fully recognized as a Jew.

DIOGO

And what about Lucio? He was circumcised as a child.

RABBI NIETO

In such cases, there is a simple ritual; a small drop of blood is all that is required.

DIOGO

And with his dark skin, he will then be accepted in the synagogue?

RABBI NIETO

Of course, he would then be a Jew. Why would you think otherwise?

DIOGO

Comments I heard yesterday from some of the congregants make me think otherwise.

RABBI NIETO

Pay no attention to them.

DIOGO

Tell that to Lucio.

RABBI NIETO

I will.

DIOGO

And if one of my boys or the young men who accompanied us choose not to be circumcised?

RABBI NIETO

I hope you and your family don't have to cross that bridge. I am told that it can be done without too much discomfort. You'll just have to convince them that it's worth it.

DIOGO

And what else of these six hundred and thirteen commandments do we need to know about?

RABBI NIETO

You can learn about them all in due time. There's an old saying--to eat an elephant, you do it one bite at a time. Although an elephant is not Kosher, and I would never consider eating one, I think you get the drift of my meaning.

DIOGO

Very well. And what else do I need to convey to my family?

RABBI NIETO

Well, everything is not so overwhelming or negative. All of you will get to assume Hebrew names. And you and your wife and her sister and husband will be able to consecrate your marriages in the Jewish tradition under the chuppah.

DIOGO

I think Gracia would like that.

RABBI NIETO

Good. Once you get these things behind you, you and your sons can undertake a course of study to understand what it truly means to be observant. You can even learn the prayers in Hebrew.

It's a lot to take in. I would be the first to admit it's not easy being a Jew. It takes time and commitment. To be frank, many Conversos who come to me go partway down the path, find it too hard a road to travel, and quit.

DIOGO

I'm not one who quits.

RABBI NIETO

That's clear to me. But if you want to become undeniably Jewish, then these are the many things required of you, your sons, and your friends.

DIOGO

Very well. Let me discuss it with them. I will let you know. But I can speak for myself. I haven't come this far to turn away from my faith.

SFX: Musical transition

ZIPPORAH

And discuss it they did. I must say, not everyone was as enthusiastic as my father. Starting with my brother Manoël and followed by my uncle Sebastião...

MANOËL

...so, how painful will this circumcision be?

DIOGO

It will hurt considerably, but they will do some things to dull the pain. I expect we will all have recovered within a week or two.

SEBASTIÃO

That's all well and good. But frankly, I have a bigger concern. How will this affect my intimate relations with Teresa?

DIOGO

Medically, no serious effect as far as I know. According to the Torah, Jewish men have been circumcised for millennia and have had no problem with copulation or having children. In the short term, you may be a little sensitive. But over the long term, you'll probably not even notice it.

SEBASTIÃO

And who will perform this circumcision?

DIOGO

I could, but I have never done the procedure. I think it would be better to have an experienced rabbi do it at the synagogue.

ABRÃO

When would we do this?

DIOGO

Within the next few days.

RODRIGO

And then we'll be accepted as Jews?

DIOGO

As the rabbi explained it, there is much more to being a Jew than I think any of us realized. Being circumcised is just the beginning. Then we must keep the Sabbath and eat only Kosher foods. I don't think any of us will have a problem with that. However, I discovered that there are several hundred more commandments we must learn about and attempt to observe. You must all realize that undertaking this is a serious commitment. And you each need to decide what is right for you.

ANDRÉ

Hundreds of rules? What if we choose not to observe some of them?

MANOEL

I'm with André. Learning the Catechism was more than I ever wanted to memorize. And what if we inadvertently break some of these rules? Do we confess to the rabbi?

DIOGO

In Judaism, there is no confessional like in the Catholic Church. This is strictly between you and God.

MANOEL

That I like. I never cared for confessing my sins to a stranger.

DIOGO

Nor did I. Then you'll be glad to know that many of these rules are impossible to observe, like handling sacrifices in the Temple that was destroyed nearly two thousand years ago or how to make a fence on your roof, but we don't have a flat roof, so it doesn't apply. What is most important are the commandments about how we treat each other--with love and respect. Isn't that the essence of the Ten Commandments?

(MORE)



DIOGO (CONT'D)

The most important thing is that we strive to observe them, knowing that our Jewish God is filled with forgiveness.

MANOEL

(laughing)

I have a feeling I will need a great deal of forgiveness.

DIOGO

Knowing you, Manoel, that may be true. But remember, if it's too much to honor and respect your father and your mother, we can always return to the Catholic Church. I am sure they will be happy to welcome you and the rest of us back...in Lisbon.

ANDRÉ

(chuckling)

Very funny, Papa.

DIOGO

Any more questions?

SEBASTIÃO

(somberly)

After we get circumcised, then what?

DIOGO

You and I will honor our marriages to Gracia and Teresa in the Jewish tradition with Hebrew vows.

SEBASTIÃO

I like that.

DIOGO

And each of us will choose a Hebrew name to mark the beginning of our new life as Jews.

SFX: Musical transition

BENJAMIN

So that's how you went from being Maria to being Zipporah?

ZIPPORAH

Yes, the Rabbi suggested that name because I had such a free spirit, like a little bird.

BENJAMIN

And how did everyone else get their names?

ZIPPORAH

They chose them...Manoel became Moses because he wanted to be brave enough to stand up against those who hate Jews. My brother André chose Daniel because he admired this prophet for remaining loyal to God despite persecution and danger. And as you have already learned, André certainly knew what it meant to be hated. My sister Theresa chose Ester, and Abrão, her husband-to-be, liked his name the way it was, so he stayed with the English translation--Abraham. My sister, Isabel, became Rachel, so her husband-to-be, Rodrigo, chose Jacob. Sebastião became Isaac because he loved to laugh. And as you already know, my father, Diogo, took the name Samuel and my mother, Gracia, took the name Rebekah, which is the name I chose for your your mother when she was born. My mother's sister, Teresa, took the name Abigail, after Abigail Minis, our new friend. That left Lucio Gama. My father said that Lucio had an enormous heart and was our source of comfort. So he became known as Noah, Shem Noah.

BENJAMIN

And the men, they all were circumcised?

ZIPPORAH

Yes, indeed. They put a brave face on, although I suspect it was more painful than they let on.

BENJAMIN

Ouch!

ZIPPORAH

Yes, it was a big ouch, but within a few days we were celebrating, because now we could finally declare for all to see that we, at last, were free to be Jews in the eyes of God. Then we celebrated our parents after they were married under the chuppah.

SFX: Shouts of Mazel Tov, and singing of traditional Sephardic wedding melody...under Zipporah's narrative below.

ZIPPORAH (CONT'D)

I can't recall a more joyous time. Even though there were many difficulties ahead, and my parents were no strangers to sorrow, on the day of their wedding, we celebrated like never before...

SFX: Music Up

ZIPPORAH (CONT'D)

And it was at the celebratory meal afterward that we learned another piece of joyous news...

SFX: Music under

SAMUEL

Your mother and I have one more blessing we want to share before we eat.

REBEKAH

We didn't want to say anything until we were certain. It appears you will be getting a new sibling in the months ahead.

MOSES

I'm not quite sure I'm following what you mean, mamae.

SAMUEL

What your mother is trying to say is she's pregnant. As best as we can guess, the baby is due in about five months.

SFX: forks being put down on plates followed by a long silence

MOSES

You're pregnant? How is that possible?

REBEKAH

You think just because your father and I are getting on in years we still don't love each other?

MOSES

Yes, but...

SAMUEL

I have treated many women your mother's age who successfully had children. We just wanted all of you to know and to share in our joy.

RACHEL

We all should be pleased for mother and father.

ZIPPORAH

Does this mean I'm going to have a little sister?

REBEKAH

Yes, or perhaps a little brother.

ZIPPORAH

What shall we name him?

REBEKAH

Your father and I have decided on Aviv if it's a boy and Aviva if it's a girl. It means Spring. This feels like a new beginning for us and, hopefully, the entire family.

ZIPPORAH

Aviva. I'm going to have a little sister...

SFX: music under and down and transition back to Zipporah's living room

ZIPPORAH (CONT'D)

The joy of that day was unfortunately stained with disappointment and tragedy.

(MORE)

## ZIPPORAH (CONT'D)

The sorrow and anger started with my brothers as they worked on a construction site hauling stones and dirt, but soon spread to nearly every family member...

SFX: hammering of rock and shouts of men working on a construction site

## SUPERVISOR

(in cockney)

'eh, paw'uguese picos, pick up 'he pace. Dis ain'' no bloody tea par'y.

## MOSES

(under his breath to  
André)

If that imbecile calls me a dick one more time...

## DANIEL

(under his breath)

Don't pay any attention to him. Do you want to get us fired? Remember, our family needs the money.

## MOSES

(under his breath)

You don't need to remind me. When those sons of bitches at the synagogue said they'd help us find work, I never thought it meant I'd be digging ditches for some cretin.

## SUPERVISOR

(in cockney)

I said pick up 'he pace. Wha' don'' you idio's understand abou' 'ha'?

## MOSES

Vá se foder.

## SUPERVISOR

(in cockney)

Wha' did you say?

## ANDRÉ

He says we're on it, boss. We're working as hard as we can.

## SUPERVISOR

Then wawk a li''le 'arder.

ANDRÉ

You've got it, boss.

MOSES

(louder)

That son of a bitch can go to hell.

SUPERVISOR

I 'eard 'ha' you pricks. Ge' off my  
si'e. You're fired. You 'ear me.  
I'll pu' 'he wawd ou' an' you'll  
never ge' ano'her job on a  
construc'ion si'e. Nah ge' ou' o f  
'ere befawe i bus' your loaf of  
bread open wi'h a shovel!

END

ANNOUNCER

This is the conclusion of Episode  
five (nine) of Flames of Freedom.  
Written by Richard Stone. Produced  
and directed by Mark Simon at Cue  
Tone Productions. Audio  
Engineering, Original Music, and  
Sound Design by David Wilson.  
Executive Producer Lance Toland.

Special thanks to our ensemble  
cast...Zipporah played by Angelines  
Santana. Benjamin played by Jamie  
Treselyan. Diogo Nunes played by  
Juan Pablo Gamboa. Gracia Nunes  
played by Gabriela Lopetegui. James  
Oglethorpe played by Ian Russell.  
Additional roles played by Brad  
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(MORE)

## ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

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